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POETRY:
A
RAP SODY.



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POETRY

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ON
POETRY:

A
RAPSODY



ALL Human Race wou'd fain be *Wits*
And Millions miss, for one that hits,
Young's universal Passion, *Pride*,
Was never known to spread so wide.
Say *Britain*, cou'd you ever boast--

Three *Poets* in an Age at most ?
Our chilling Climate hardly bears
A *Sprig* of Bays in Fifty Years :
While ev'ry Fool his Claim alledges,
As if it grew in common Hedges.
What Reason can there be assign'd
For this Perversness in the Mind ?

Brutes

Beutes find out where their Talents lie :

A *Bear* will not attempt to fly :

A founder'd *Horse* will oft debate,
Before he tries a five-barr'd Gate :

15

A *Dog* by Instinct turns aside,
Who sees the Ditch too deep and wide.

But *Man* we find the only Creature,
Who, led by *Folly*, fights with *Nature* ;

20

Who, when *she* loudly cries, *Forbear*,
With Obstinacy fixes there ;

And where his *Genius* least inclines,
Absurdly bends his whole Designs.

Not *Empire* to the Rising-Sun

25

By Valour, Conduct, Fortune won,
Nor highest *Wisdom* in Debates

For framing Laws to govern States ;
Nor Skill in Sciences profound,

So large to grasp the Circle round ;

Such heavenly Influence require,

As how to strike the *Muses* Lyre.

30

Not Beggar's Brat, on Bulk begot ;

Nor Bastard of a Pedlar *Scot* ;

Nor Boy brought up to cleaning Shoes,

35

The Spawn of *Bridewell*, or the Stews ;

Nor Infants dropt, the spurious Pledges

Of *Gipsies* littering under Hedges,

Are so disqualified by Fate,

To

(5)
To rise in *Church*, or *Law*, or *State*;
As he, whom *Pæbus* in his Ire
Hath *Blasted* with poetick Fire,

What Hope of Custom in the *Fair*,
While not a Soul demands your *Ware*?
Where you have nothing to produce
For private Life, or publick Use?
Court, *City*, *Country* want you not;
You cannot bribe, betray, or plot,
For Poets, Law makes no Provision:
The Wealthy have you in Derision.
Of State Affairs you cannot smatter,
Are awkward when you try to flatter.
Your Portion, taking *Britain* round,
† Was just one annual Hundred Pound.
Now not so much as in Remainder
Since *Cibber* brought in an Attainder:
For ever fixt by Right Divine,
(A Monarch's Right) on *Grubstreet* Line.
Poor starv'ling Bard, how small thy Gains!
How unproportion'd to thy Pains!

And here a *Simile* comes Pat in:
Tho' *Chickens* take a Month to fatten,
The Guests in less than half an Hour
Will more than half a Score devour.
So, after toiling twenty Days,
To earn a Stock of Pence and Praise,

† Paid to the Poet Laureat, which Place was given to one
Cibber, a Player.

Thy Labours, grown the Critick's Prey,
 'Are swallow'd o'er a Dish of Tea;
 Gone, to be never heard of more,
 Gone, where the *Chickens* went before.

70

How shall a new Attempter learn
 Of different Spirits to discern,
 And how distinguish, which is which,
 The Poet's Vein, or scribbling Itch?
 Then here an old experienc'd Sinner
 Instructing thus a young Beginner.

75

Consult yourself, and if you find
 A powerful Impulse urge your Mind,
 Impartial judge within your Breast
 What Subject you can manage best;
 Whether your Genius most inclines
 To Satire, Praise, or hum'rous Lines;
 To Elegies in mournful Tone,
 Or Prologue sent from Hand unknown.
 Then rising with *Aurora's* Light,
 The Muse invoc'd, sit down to write;
 Blot out, correct, insert, refine,
 Enlarge, diminish, interline;
 Be mindful, when Invention fails,
 To scratch your Head, and bite your Nails.

80

Your Poem finish'd, next your Care
 Is needful, to transcribe it fair.

85

In modern Wit all printed Trash, is
Set off with num'rous *Breaks*—and *Dashes*—

To Statesmen wou'd you give a Wipe,
You print it in *Italick Type*.
When Letters are in vulgar Shapes,
'Tis ten to one the Wit escapes ;
But when in *Capitals* exprest,
The dullest Reader smoaks the Jest :
Or else perhaps he may invent
A better than the Poet meant,
As learn'd Commentators view
In *Homer* more than *Homer* knew.

Your Poem in its modish Dress,
Correctly fitted for the Press,
Convey by Penny-Post to *Lintot*,
But let no Friend alive look into't.
If *Lintot* thinks 'twill quit the Cost,
You need not fear your Labour lost :
And how agreeably surpriz'd
Are you to see it advertis'd !
The Hawker shews you one in Print,
As fresh as Farthings from the Mint :
The Product of your Toil and Sweating ;
A Bastard of your own begetting.

Be sure at *Will's* the following Day,
Lie snug, and hear what Criticks say.

And

And if you find the general Vogue
 Pronounces you a stupid Rogue ;
 Damns all your Thoughts as low and little, 120
 Sit still, and swallow down your Spittle.
 Be silent as a Politician,
 For talking may beget Suspicion :
 Or praise the Judgment of the Town,
 And help your self to run it down. 125
 Give up your fond paternal Pride,
 Nor argue on the weaker Side ;
 For Poems read without a Name
 We justly praise, or justly blame.
 And Criticks have no partial Views, 130
 Except they know whom they abuse.
 And since you ne'er provok'd their Spight,
 Depend upon't their Judgment's right :
 But if you blab, you are undone ;
 Consider what a Risk you run. 135
 You lose your Credit all at once ;
 The Town will mark you for a Dunce :
 The vilest Doggrel Grubstreet sends,
 Will pass for yours with Foes and Friends.
 And you must bear the whole Disgrace, 140
 Till some fresh Blockhead takes your Place.

Your Secret kept, your Poem sunk,
 And sent in Quires to line a Trunk ;

If still you be dispos'd to rhyme,
 Go try your Hand a second Time. 145
 Again you fail, yet safe's the Word,
 Take Courage, and attempt a Third.
 But first with Care imploy your Thoughts,
 Where Criticks mark'd your former Faults.
 The trivial Turns, the borrow'd Wit,
 The *Similes* that nothing fit;
 The *Can* which ev'ry Fool repeats,
 Town-Jests, and Coffee-house Conceits;
 Descriptions tedious, flat and dry,
 And introduc'd the Lord knows why, 155
 Or where we find your Fury set
 Against the harmless Alphabet;
 On A's and B's your Malice vent,
 While Readers wonder whom you meant:
 A publick, or a private *Robber*; 160
 A *Statesman*, or a South-Sea *Jobber*.
 A *Prelate* who no God believes;
 A—, or Den of Thieves.
 A Pick-purse at the Bar, or Bench;
 A Dutcheff, or a Suburb Wench. 165
 Or oft when Epithets you link,
 In gaping Lines to fill a Chink:
 Like stepping Stones to save a Stride,
 In Streets where Kennels are too wide;
 Or like a Heel-piece to support 170
 A Cripple with one Foot too short;

Or like a Bridge that joins a Marish
 To Moorlands of a diff'rent Parish.
 So have I seen ill-coupled Hounds,
 Drag diff'rent Ways in miry Grounds.
 So Geographers in *Afric*-Maps
 With Savage Pictures fill their Gaps;
 And o'er uninhabitable Downs
 Place Elephants for want of Towns.

But tho' you miss your third Essay,
 You need not throw your Pen away.
 Lay now aside all Thoughts of Fame,
 To spring more profitable Game.
 From Party-Merit seek Support;
 The vilest Verse thrives best at Court.
 A Pamphlet in Sir *Rob's* Defence
 Will never fail to bring in Pence;
 Nor be concern'd about the Sale,
 He pays his Workmen on the Nail.

A Prince the Moment he is crown'd,
 Inherits ev'ry Virtue round,
 As Emblems of the sov'reign Pow'r,
 Like other Bawbles of the Tow'r.
 Is gen'rous, valiant, just and wise,
 And so continues 'till he dies.
 His humble Senate this professes,
 In all their Speeches, Votes, Addresses.

But once you fix him in a Tomb,
 His Virtues fade, his Vices bloom;
 And each Perfection wrong imputed
 Is Folly, at his Death confuted.
 The Loads of Poems in his Praise,
 Ascending make one Funeral-blaze,
 As soon as you can hear his Knell,
 This God on Earth turns Devil in Hell.
 And, lo, his Ministers of State,
 Transform'd to Imps, his Levee wait
 Where, in this Scene of endless Woe,
 They ply their former Arts below.
 And as they sail in *Charon's* Boat,
 Contrive to bribe the Judge's Vote.
 To *Cerberus* they give a Sop,
 His triple-barking Mouth to stop:
 Or in the Iv'ry Gate of Dreams,
 Project * * * and * * * * *
 Or hire their Party-Pamphleteers,
 To set *Elysium* by the Ears.

Then *Poet*, if you mean to thrive,
 Employ your Muse on Kings alive;
 With Prudence gath'ring up a Cluster
 Of all the Virtues you can muster:
 Which form'd into a Garland sweet,
 Lay humbly at your Monarch's Feet;

Who

Who, as the Odours reach his Throne,
 Will smile, and think 'em all his own : 230
 For *Law* and *Gospel* both determine
 All Virtues lodge in royal *Ermine*.
 (I mean the Oracles of both,
 Who shall depose it upon Oath.)
 Your Garland in the following Reign. 235
 Change but their Names, will do again.

But if you think this Trade too base,
 (Which seldom is the Dunces Case)
 Put on the Critick's Brow, and sit
 At *Wills* the puny Judge of Wit.
 A Nod, a Shrug, a scornful Smile, 240
 With Caution us'd, may serve a while.
 Proceed no further in your Part,
 Before you learn the Terms of Art :
 (For you may easy be too far gone, 245
 In all our modern Criticks Jargon.)
 Then talk with more authentick Face.
 Of *Unities*, in *Time* and *Place*.
 Get Scraps of *Horace* from your Friends,
 And have them at your Fingers Ends. 250
 Learn *Aristotle's* Rules by rote,
 And at all Hazards boldly quote :
 Judicious *Rymer* oft review :
 Wise *Dennis*, and profound *Boswell*.

Read

Read all the *Profuses* of *Dryden*,
 For these our Criticks much confide in,
 (Tho' meenly writ at first for filling
 To raise the Volume's Price, a Shilling.)

A forward Critick often dupes us
 With sham Quotations † *Peri Flapetous* : 260
 And if we have not read *Longinus*,
 Will magisterially out-shine us.
 Then, lest with *Greek* he over-run ye,
 Procure the Book for Love or Money,
 Translated from *Boileau's* Translation 265
 And quote Quotation on Quotation.

At *Wills* you hear a Poem read,
 Where *Barrus* from the Table-head,
 Reclining on his Elbow-chair,
 Gives Judgment with decisive Air. 270
 To whom the Tribe of circling Wits,
 As to an Oracle submits.
 He gives Directions to the Town,
 To cry it up, or run it down.
 (Like *Courtiers*, when they send a Note 275
 Instructing *Members* how to Vote.)
 He sets the Stamp of Bad and Good,
 Tho' not a Word be understood.

† A famous Treatise of *Longinus*, ‡ By Mr. *Welfed*.

Your Lesson learnt, you'll be secure
 To get the Name of *Connoisseur*. 280
 And when your Merits once are known,
 Procure Disciples of your own.

Our Poets (you can never want 'em,
 Spread thro' *Augusta Trinobantum*)
 Computing by their Pecks of Coals, 285
 Amount to just Nine thousand Souls,
 These o'er their proper Districts govern,
 Of Wit and Humour, Judges sov'reign,
 In ev'ry Street a City-bard
 Rules, like an Alderman his Ward. 290
 His indisputed Rights extend
 Thro' all the Lane, from End to End.
 The Neighbours round admire his *Shrewdness*,
 For Songs of *Loyalty* and *Lewdness*.
 Out-done by none in Rhyming well, 295
 Altho' he never learnt to spell.

Two bordering Wits contend for Glory;
 And one is *Whig*, and one is *Tory*.
 And this, for Epicks claims the Bays,
 And that, for Elegiack Lays. 300
 Some fam'd for Numbers soft and smooth,
 By Lovers spoke in *Punch's* Booth,
 And some as justly Fame extols
 For lofty Lines in *Smithfield* Drolls.

Ba-

Bavius in *Wapping* gains Renown;

And *Mævius* reigns o'er *Kentish-Town*;

Tigellius plac'd in *Phæbus* Car,

From *Ludgate* shines to *Temple-bar*.

Harmonius Cibber entertains

The Court with annual Birth-day Strains;

Whence *Gay* was banish'd in Disgrace,

Where *Pope* will never show his Face;

Where *T---* must torture his Invention,

To flatter *Knaves*, or lose his *Pension*.

But these are not a thousand Part

Of *Jobbers* in the Poets Art,

Attending each his proper Station,

And all in due Subordination;

Thro' ev'ry Alley to be found,

In *Garrets* high, or under Ground:

And when they join their *Pericranies*,

Out skips a *Book of Miscellanies*.

Hobbes clearly proves that ev'ry Creature

Lives in a State of War by Nature.

The Greater for the Smallest watch,

But meddle seldom with their Match.

A Whale of moderate Size will draw

A Shole of *Hertings* down his Maw,

A Fox with *Geese* his Belly crams;

A Wolf destroys a thousand Lambs.

But

But search among the humming Race,

The Brave are worried by the Base.

If, on *Parnassus*' Top you sit,

You rarely bite, are always bit :

Each Poet of inferior Size

332

On you shall rail and criticize,

And strive to tear you Limb from Limb,

While others do as much for him.

The Vermin only teaze and pinch

Their Foes superior by an Inch.

340

So, Nat'ralists observe, a Flea

Hath smaller Fleas that on him prey,

And these have smaller Fleas to bite 'em,

And so proceed *ad infinitum*;

Thus ev'ry Poet in his Kind,

349

Is bit by him that comes behind;

Who, tho' too little to be seen,

Can teaze, and gall, and give the Spleen,

Call Dunces, Fools, and Sons of Whores,

Lay Grubstreet at each others Doors,

350

Extol the Greek and Roman Masters,

And curse our modern Postasters;

Complain, as many an ancient Bard did,

How Genius is no more rewarded;

How wrong a Taste prevails among us;

355

How much our Ancestors out-sung us ;

Can

(17)
Can personate an awkward Scorn
For those who are not Poets born
And all their Brother Dunces lash,
Who crowd the Press with hourly Trash. 360

O, *Grubstreet*! how do I bemoan thee,
Whose graceless Children scorn to own thee!
Their filial Piety forgot,
Deny their Country like a Scot;
Tho' by their Idiom and Grimace 365
They soon betray their native Place:
Yet *thou* hast greater Cause to be
Asham'd of them, than they of thee.
Degenerate from their ancient Brood,
Since first the Court allow'd them Food. 370

Remains a Difficulty still,
To purchase Fame by writing ill:
From *Flecknoe* down to *Howard's* Time,
How few have reach'd the low *Sublime*?
For when our high-born *Howard* dy'd, 375
Blackmore alone his Place supply'd:
And least a Chasm should intervene,
When Death had finish'd *Blackmore's* Reign,
The leaden Crown devolv'd to thee,
Great † Poet of the *Hollow-Tree*. 380
But, oh, how unsecure thy Throne!
A thousand Bards thy Right disown:

C

They

They plot to turn in factious Zeal,
Duncenia to a Common-weal;
 And with rebellious Arms pretend
 An equal Priv'lege to descend.

In Bulk there are not more Degrees,
 From *Elephants* to *Mites* in Cheese,
 Than what a curious Eye may trace
 In Creatures of the rhiming Race,
 From bad to worse, and worse they fall,
 But, who can reach the Worst of all?
 For, tho' in Nature Depth and Height
 Are equally held infinite,
 In Poetry the Height we know :
 'Tis only infinite below.
 For Instance : When you rashly † think,
 No Rhymer can like *Weldsted* sink.

His Merits ballanc'd you shall find,
 That *Feilding* leaves him far behind.
Concannen, more aspiring Bard,
 Climbs downwards, deeper, by a Yard :
 Smart JEMMY MOOR with Vigor drops,
 The Rest pursue as thick as Hops :
 With Heads to Points the Gulph they enter,
 Linkt perpendicular to the Centre :

And

† *Vide* The Treatise on the *Profound* and Mr. *Pope's*
Dunciad.

And as their Heels elated rise,
Their Heads attempt the nether Skies.

O, what Indignity and Shame
To prostitute the Muse's Name,
By flatt'ring----whom Heaven design'd
The Plagues and Scourges of Mankind.
Bred up in Ignorance and Sloth,
And ev'ry Vice that nurses both.

Fair *Britain* in thy Monarch blest, 415
Whose Virtues bear the strictest Test;
Whom never *Faction* cou'd bespatter,
Nor *Minister*, nor *Poet* flatter.
What Justice in rewarding Merit?
What Magnanimity of Spirit?
What Lineaments divine we trace
Thro' all the Features of his Face;
Tho' Peace with Olive bind his Hands,
Confest the conqu'ring Hero stands,
Hydaspes, *Indus*, and the *Ganges*, 425
Dread from his Hands impending Changes.
From him the *Tartar*, and *Chinese*,
Short by the Knees intreat for Peace.
The *Consort* of his Throne and Bed,
A perfect Goddess born and bred.
Appointed sov'reign Judge to sit
On Learning, Eloquence and Wit.

Our

Our eldest Hope, divine *Iulus*,
 (Late, very late, O, may he rule us)
 What early Manhood has he shown, 435

Before his downy Beard was grown!
 Then think, what Wonders will be done
 By going on as he begun ;
 An Heir for *Britain* to secure
 As long as Sun and Moon endure. 440

The Remnant of the royal Blood,
 Comes pouring on me like a Flood,
 Bright Goddesses, in Number five ;
 Duke *William*, sweetest Prince alive.

Now sing the *Minister* of State, 445
 Who shines alone, without a Mate.
 Observes with what majestick Port
 This *Atlas* stands to prop the Court :
 Intent the publick Debts to pay,
 Like prudent † *Fabius* by Delay. 450
 Thou great Vicegerent of the King,
 Thy Praises ev'ry Muse shall sing.
 In all Affairs thou sole Director,
 Of Wit and Learning chief Protector ;
 Tho' small the Time thou hast to spare, 455
 The Church is thy peculiar Care.

Of

† *Unus Homo nobis Cunctandorestituit rem.*

Of pious Prelates what a Stock
 You chuse to rule the Sable-flock,
 You raise the Honour of the Peerage,
 Proud to attend you at the Steerage. 460
 You dignify the noble Race,
 Content yourself with humbler Place.
 Now Learning, Valour, Virtue, Sense,
 To Titles give the sole Pretence.
 St. George beheld thee with Delight, 465
 Vouchsafe to be an azure Knight,
 When on thy Breast and Sides *Herculean*,
 He fixt the *Star* and *String Cerulean*.

Say, Poet, in what other Nation,
 Shone ever such a Constellation.
 Attend ye *Popes*, and *Youngs*, and *Gays*,
 And tune your Harps, and strow your Bays.
 Your Panegyricks here provide,
 You cannot err on Flattery's Side.
 Above the Stars exalt your Stile, 475
 You still are low ten thousand Mile.
 On *Lewis* all his Bards bestow'd,
 Of Incense many a thousand Load ;
 But *Europe* mortify'd his Pride,
 And swore the fawning Rascals ly'd : 480
 Yet what the World refus'd to *Lewis*,
 Apply'd to ----- exactly true is ;

Exactly

Exactly true ! Invidious Poet !
 'Tis fifty thousand Times below it.

Translate me now some Lines, if you can, 481
 From *Virgil, Martial, Ovid, Lucan*;
 They could all Pow'r in Heaven divide,
 And do no Wrong to either Side :
 They teach you how to spilt a Hair,
 † Give ----- and Jove an equal Share. 490
 Yet, why should we be lac'd so straight ;
 I'll give my * * * * Butterweight.
 And Reason good ; for many a Year
 ----- never intermedd'd here : 495
 Nor, tho' his Priests be duly paid,
 Did ever we desire his Aid :
 We now can better do without him,
 Since *Woolston* gave us Arms to rout him.
 * * * *Cætera desiderantur* * * *

† Divisum Imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet.

F I N I S

